Report on a Brief Tour of North Bihar (Mithilā), January 2017

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This essay first provides some examples of high-quality stone sculpture encountered recently in the Mithilā region. It briefly surveys the historical and art historical context of the production of these sculptures, and then places them within the parameters of the author's year-long fieldwork research project on sponsor or "donor" figures on eastern Indian sculpture ca. 8th-13th century, for which the tour of the Mithilā region was a small part. It provides an analysis of the donor figures observed in Mithila, and offers some comparative data from the larger project's findings, though those are tentative since the project is ongoing.

1.

In January of 2017 I was treated to some shining revelations of lovingly preserved stone sculptures, in villages surrounding Begusarai, Darbhanga, and Madhubani in the region of northern Bihar known at Mithilā.[1] Three museums in Begusarai and Darbhanga were also visited and were found to house important holdings. These sculptures generally date from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, though a few are earlier. The ones in the villages were the objects of daily ritual devotions by priests and devout lay people. They are well-cared for by villagers who have re-established them in locally built shrines near where they were discovered in fields, or ponds, or older *devisthan*.[2]

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Among the highlights I was astounded to see an overlife-size standing Bhairava in the Bhairavasthan of Balia, on a scale I have rarely encountered (Figs. 14.1 & 2). Details such as a dagger in a decorated scabbard strapped to the right hip, a *vanamālā* of decapitated heads, a suitably emaciated Bhṛingī, convincing skulls, and writhing snakes twisting around each other on the back of the free-standing figure added dimension to the awesome form. Along the same lines, but in a different style marked by forms smoothed to machine-like precision (a mode I encountered several times and is possibly distinctive to Mithilā), was a gruesome Camuṇḍā, picking her teeth, holding a severed head, and with a scorpion crawling on her abdomen (Figs. 14.3 & 4). Deliciously set within a blood-red niche in Begusarai District's Baripura's Kaliasthan, the blackish stone now has red-limned silver eyes which gleam even from a distance. She also has an extended family of sponsors on the pedestal, on the viewer's left (Fig. 14.5). It appears that the man in front accompanied by his principal and secondary wives– or else his wife and adult daughter or other relative–cooperated in sponsoring the creation of this sculpture.

The lathe-like precision of forms against a plain backdrop is also found in the compact four-armed Durgā in the Viṣṇu Mandir of Salampur in Madhubani district (Fig. 14.6). She too has a sponsor figure on the left of the pedestal, behind Durgā's lion *vāhana*, a solitary female donor. It is certainly an intriguing example of a female sponsor of a female deity, though one never knows for what context it was commissioned: for a village shrine, a major temple, or a wealthy woman's personal or family shrine.

A detail from a Sūrya image in Raghepura village almost gives the impression of lapidary metalwork (Fig. 14.7), but it too is stone carving of a particularly hard stone that takes both precise marks and high polish. The light tan color of an Umā-Maheśvara sculpture (Fig. 14.8) in one of the real treasure-houses of Mithilā sculpture, Bheet Bhagwanpur, gives the

appearance of a completely different treatment of stone.[3] However, the handling of the lotus suspended near the pointed finial of the sculpture (Fig. 14.9) reveals a similar conception defying the intractable hardness of stone to create the illusion of an organic, almost liquid suppleness. On the pedestal one finds the *vāhana* of Śiva on the viewer's left, and Durgā on the right (Fig. 14.10). On either side of the stem of the lotus that supports the gods are small figures of the sponsor couple, the male on Śiva's side, and the female on Umā's, an example of the common matching of the sex of the donor with that of the god.

The same theme of Śiva caressing his consort in the Śiva Mandir in Benwara village (Fig. 14.11) displays more elongated faces and less interest in dense detail but more delicate, even wavering lines. Here a sponsor couple is shown on Śiva's side of the pedestal (not shown), but a solitary aristocratic woman in a hair-scarf, as found frequently on sponsors in Bihar and West Bengal, appears on Umā's (Fig. 14.12).

Although I encountered relatively few pre-tenth century sculptures in my brief visit to Mithilā territory, as least one relatively early (perhaps 8th c.) Viṣṇu is in the Begusarai Museum. It has a number of late Gupta characteristics, including the curling tendrils of his hair, the "bee-stung" lips and wide eyebrows over heavy-lidded eyes. This would, perhaps, not be out of place in Magadha of the time.

An altogether different affair is the gleaming black, oiled stone sculpture of Viṣṇu riding on Garuḍa, also in the Viṣṇu Mandir of Salampur (Fig. 14.14). In some ways this is reminiscent of ca. 8th-9th century sculptures in Magadha–such as one now in the Indian Museum in Kolkata from Nalanda[4] –in which, like the Mithilā example, Viṣṇu is literally lofted on the shoulders of his *vāhana*. Yet the very tall *kirīṭa mukuṭa* and the cut-outs of the backslab behind the head and body suggest a much later date. On the other hand, the rounded top is found generally in

9th to 10th century sculpture in Magadha. Thus this sculpture in itself suggests a distinctive sculptural school or workshop in Mithilā, one that remembered and enjoyed archaistic features from centuries past, even as they were rendered in an updated style with a preference for restrained graphic designs on the backslab accompanying fully three-dimensional, anatomically proportionate and convincing bodies. The minuteness of the sponsor figure on the pedestal (Fig. 14.15) is another late feature, the early sponsor figures tending to be larger and not limited to the pedestal. This kneeling figure making *añjali mudrā* has a three-legged *pūjā* bucket with a bail handle and a water jar ready for either the consecration ritual (*prāṇapratiṣṭhā*) or the first *pūjā* itself, or both.

Stylistically closely-related images can be found in a number of villages in Mithilā, suggesting that there was indeed a regional style that developed alongside the remains of sculptures from different periods and tastes. For example, one can compare the Viṣṇu of Tharhi village's Durgasthan (Fig. 14.16) with the Viṣṇu from Benwara village's Śiva Mandir (Fig. 14.17) to see that sponsors from different locations were drawing on a regional atelier of sculptors. As for the sponsors of this sculpture, the Benwara Viṣṇu depicts Garuḍa at the center of the pedestal, and two pairs of sponsor couples on either side of him, presumably an extended family (Fig. 14.18). The male on the viewer's right offers a long flower garland, while the others make *añjali mudrā*. The significance of the distinction of the garland bearer is not clear at this distance in time; perhaps he was the principal sponsor, or was the senior living member of the clan.

A final example illustrates a number of things all at the same time: first, that Buddhist material is found in the region, even though not as plentifully as Brahamanical sculpture[5]; second, that some sculptors in the ca. 11th-12th century continued in the mode more common in south Bihar and Bengal;

and third, that many of the basic conventions were shared across both stylistic and sectarian lines. The seated Tārā in the Darbhanga Chandradhari Museum was from the Maharaja family collection in Ranti, Madhubani (Fig.14.19). There is a brief, unread inscription on the lower left of the pedestal, which may very well identify the names of the sponsor couple on the right (Fig. 14.20).

2.

The first recourse of any attempt to contextualize the many objects documented in the three districts visited must be to published work on the local history contemporary to the sculpture, and then to the art history of area. Fortunately, there has been a great deal of work by historians on the Karṇāṭas of Mithilā (ca. 1097-1324). The life and personality of the founder, Nānyadeva seems to have fascinated scholars, who have taken up his story again and again.[6] Historian C.P.N. Sinha calls him "one of the most remarkable personalities and political figures of north-eastern India." Besides being a "valiant warrior and skilled diplomat," Nānyadeva "was a great patron of art, literature and culture. He is himself renowned as one of the famous scholars of his time."[7] Into the seventeenth century, "Newar Malla kings had declared him as their own *Pradhan Purva Purusha* (highly respected ancestor) and founder of their dynasty."[8]

Such esteem was apparently not misplaced Nānyadeva established enduring landmarks in political, military and even literary fields. The establishment of a kingdom in northern India that, almost uniquely, for more than two centuries successfully survived in the face of repeated invasions by various armies that controlled eastern, central and northern India is irresistible to many contemporary Indian scholars. His scholarly achievements are no less extraordinary. To him is attributed an encyclopedic work, the *Granthamāhārṇava*, which he seems to have compiled even before a learned and insightful versified

commentary on music in relation to dramatic performance, the *Bharatabhāṣya* (the latter text quotes from the former thus establishing its priority).[9] This "lucid and comprehensive work" displays considerable erudition on the part of the author, including knowledge of Abhinavagupta and other learned authors, and Nānyadeva "brought in much from his vedic studies."[10] Musical historian Kavi has also assembled a capsule sketch of Nānyadeva based on the auto-biographical references in the musical treatise when asserting his own opinions after citing those of others:

> He was the brother of Kīrtirāja, and he defeated the heroes of Souvīra and Mālavā and broke up the power of Gauḍa & Bangāla kings. He probably married a Gīrjara lady. He bore the titles of Rājanārāyana, Nṛpamalla, Mohanamurāri, Pratyagravāṇīpati, etc.[11]

In contrast to the focus on Nānyadeva's political and literary achievements, investigations into the art of the region and period are not nearly so advanced nor did they begin so early in the twentieth century. Treatments of the art that I have encountered to date are, however valuable, for the most part very broad surveying and initial documentation by interested non-art historians.[12] One of the fundamental works of the art history of eastern Indian sculpture, by Frederick Asher, only includes the word Mithilā in the geographical introduction, but neither it nor Darbhanga or Tirabhukti appear in the index.[13] Despite extended fieldwork in Bihar, including in Monghyr, parts of which are in Mithilā, it does not appear that Asher invested his time north of the Gaṅgā. Even the most comprehensive of art historical treatments of eastern Indian sculpture between the 8th and 12th centuries, Susan Huntington's *The 'Pāla-Sena' Schools of Sculpture*–still indispensible, more than thirty years after publication–offers only two examples of work from north Bihar or Mithilā, both

from Saran, now in the Patna Museum.[14] Again, no fieldwork in the region appears to have been conducted in the region by the author. The fact only that two plates of Mithilā sculptures out of more than 280 appear in Huntington's book, and none in Asher's, might suggest that American art historians have dismissed the region as of little importance artistically. While a certain amount of neglect is certainly a justifiable conclusion based on this type of evidence, a complete dismissal or a lack of recognition on their part would be too hasty a judgment on ours.

In fact Susan Huntington's analysis of the Saran sculptures concludes that they are "one of the most interesting developments" in the four hundred year period of stylistic evolution in Bihar covered in her book.[15] What she has to say has relevance, in my opinion, to a broader area of Mithilā sculpture than Saran alone. She points out that just as there were political struggles in the region with kings of western and central Indian polities ("Candellas, Gurjara-Pratihāras, Rāṣṭrakūṭas, Kalcuris and others"), so too artists in Saran "came into contact with [artistic] developments occurring to the west of it."[16] She points out that what she terms "Cedi influence" had a visible impact largely on Brahmanical production, "in accordance with the religious preferences of the rulers and populace [so] it is likely that exchange of designs and styles took place largely among similar sects."[17] She also rightly observes–for Saran, but it can also be extended to the Mithilā region as a whole–that "many images from Saran District belong to the Pāla reformulation and show no influence of Cedi art."[18] Both her Saran examples are in the Patna Museum, and both are Viṣṇu sculptures, not surprisingly given the preponderance of this theme I found there, as discussed below.[19] In addition, both the Saran sculptures have prominent sponsor figures. One of the two sculptures is more in line with Pāla visual values (her fig. 158) while the other has greater

resemblance to features found in Candella art. Since Huntington's focus is on Pāla-Sena schools of sculpture, she regards this school as "a peripheral statement of general Pāla trends,"[20] but at the same time she recognizes the school for its "considerable interest" in its own right.

Although the treatment is brief, especially compared with the extensive exploration of Magadha sculpture by both Asher and Huntington, Huntington's observations provide a useful framework for considering sources for some of the distinctive features of sculptures found in the Begusarai, Darbhanga and Madhubani regions. The connections she mentions to artistic developments to the west in neighboring Uttar Pradesh as well as to Magadha to the south, Aṅga to the immediate west, and even further afield in Bengal, must all be considered as relevant for Mithila sculpture, helping to explain the varieties of styles found in the region. To this should probably be added another sub-region's sculpture, that of Almora in the southern foothills of the Himalayas that might also need to be taken into account. The visual evidence[21] is all the more intriguing as there is some evidence that the founders of the Karṇāṭa rulers traced immediate origins to that region, rather than the usually stressed Karnataka area. Shrestha 'Malla', basing himself mainly on sources from Nepal, insists rather idiosyncratically that Nānyadeva's family had migrated into Himalayan Garhwal, Uttarkhand or even Lahaul as early as the ninth century.[22] More judiciously, R.S. Sharma suggests that, "[i]t seems reasonable to assume that the forefathers of Nānya established themselves as feudatory chiefs in Tirhut on the border of Nepal because of the successive raids by the Cālukyas. After the withdrawal of the Cālukyan arm[ies], they rose to prominence, broke off their allegiance and established themselves as rulers of Tirabhukti and Nepal."[23] That would have exposed Nānyadeva and his clan to the art of the border zones of the Himalayan world of the eleventh century. Certainly some of the sculpture found in Mithilā is as much or more in tune artistically with

the mid-northern fringes of the regions to the west of Mithilā than it is to considerably more distant (geographically and stylistically) Karnataka. It is as if at times the new rulers starting in the late eleventh were much more comfortable with modes of seeing that they were familiar with in that area, and encouraged artists to work in a somewhat archaistic mode, even as other local sponsors continued with the Pāla-Sena inflected style, and the Mithilā artists continued to develop their own distinctive mode.

3.

The research project on which I have been engaged in India in 2016-2017 as a Senior Fellow at the American Institute of Indian Studies is a study of donor portraiture on Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain sculpture (stone and metal) from eastern India (West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha) between ca. 8th to 13th centuries. Despite their small size relative to the overall sculpture, donor portraits on the pedestals of the sculptures convey crucial information relevant to the gender and social identity of the sponsors. Some of the more elaborate scenes on the pedestals also depict religious behavior related to rituals of worship, reverence, and consecration. The object of the research project is to try to discover patterns in the way the sponsor figures are depicted spatially and the gender distribution in relation to the main theme of the sculpture. I have been documenting examples over the last eight months, and it was as part of that larger fieldwork project that I spent several days in the Mithilā region.

With the help of Dr. Sushant Kumar, I documented 69 sculptures mainly in villages but also in a few museums in the Mithilā region. Forty-one, or 60% of the documented sculptures had sponsor figures on the pedestals. Of the total number of documented sculptures with sponsor figures, 44% (18 of 41) depicted one or another form of Viṣṇu. This is twice as large as the overall average in Bihar and West Bengal, of the 406

sculptures with sponsor figures I have documented this year.[24] Of these, approximately 19% were Viṣṇu figures. However, in Magadha there are many more Buddhist sculptures than have been found to date in the north Bihar region, especially the core of the Mithilā region. Of the total 406 sculptures with sponsor figures I have documented in West Bengal and Bihar (in museums, archaeological sites and active shrines and temples), Buddhas (crowned and uncrowned) alone constitute 13% of the total (55), various forms of Avalokiteśvara 11.5% (47), and Tārā 8% (32 examples). Thus these three subjects form 32.5% of the total so far; and with Viṣṇu, account for 50% of the total. By contrast, of the 69 total sculptures documented in the Mithilā region, only 13% were Buddhist, and of these, only two had sponsor figures out of a total of 41 (5%). Of course, by no means would I claim that these figures and statistics are necessarily representative of the whole of Mithilā in terms of what has survived or what was originally there. They merely represent an almost random sampling of an intensive search over four days at villages and sites to which I was guided by Dr. Sushant Kumar. It is merely a preliminary foray into a part of Bihar which has been relatively under-assessed.

About ten percent of the total number of documented sculptures in Mithilā with sponsor figures had solitary female sponsorship (4 of 41). Unlike the perception based on inscriptions alone, where it is frequently stated that "an women donor [sic] is almost always associated with her husband,"[25] in at least these four examples, they are depicted completely independent of any male relatives. Among those four, there was no correlation between solo female sponsors and female deities: only one of four examples was of a female deity (Durgā, Fig. 14.6), while two of the others were of Viṣṇu and one was of Lokeśvara. By contrast, about 22 of the total number of documented sculptures with sponsors figures had solitary male sponsorship (9 of 41), a little more than twice as many

(Fig. 14.15). Two of those nine sculptures with solo male sponsors were of female deities, both Durgā. Where there was definite correlation is in the production of the theme of Śiva and his consort: in all five cases (a little over 12% of the total), there was joint sponsorship of either couples or extended families, always with at least one female on the right and one male on the left, aligning the sex of the sponsor with that of deity on that side (Figs. 14.10 and 14.12).

The largest single category of sponsorship was that of mixed-sex couples, presumably married couples. They constituted slightly over 34% of the total 14 of 41), and of those, the majority (11 of 14) were "joint couples"–that is, found together on the same side of the pedestal, usually on the viewer's left (8 of 11) but occasionally (3 of 11) on the right (Fig. 14.20). Three were "split couples"; that is, divided on different sides of the pedestal, in each case with the male on the left and the female on the right (Fig. 14.10).

A third category, besides male and female solitary sponsorship and that by couples, is that of extended families. In the examples documented here, 22% were of this variety (9 of 41), and most of these were actually extensions or permutations of the second category (sponsor couples) in that there were either two pairs of sponsor couples (Fig. 14.18) or a joint sponsor couple or extended group on one side of the pedestal and one or more additional members of the extended family on the right (Fig. 14.12). But the largest number was a male with, as it were, two or three wives and/or daughters (Fig. 14.5).

There is one other observation that is perhaps worth noting. From this admittedly small sample of documented sculptures, even with slightly more than twice as many solitary male donors as female, there are exactly as many total female sponsors depicted among the forty-one examples as there are male. In total, there are 36 males and 36 females, not counting

the ones that are either indiscernible or fragments that preserve only one side of what might be joint or split sponsor couples or extended family sponsorship. This "on-average" equality of depictions of males and females may seem unexpected, but it is in line with the analysis of a larger sample of the sponsorship of some 77 Viṣṇu sculptures from West Bengal and Bihar (including the 18 Mithilā sculptures included here). In that sample, of 119 sponsors depicted on 77 Viṣṇu sculptures, slightly over 45% were women.[26]

What is also strongly correlated for both men and women sponsors, but particularly for males, is a preference for a location on the proper right side of the deity. Seventy-four percent of the sponsor figures depicted on the pedestals were on the viewer's left side, and only twenty-six percent on the right. Even among both male and female solitary donors, the majority were on the left, suggesting that the left side of the pedestal, placed on the deity's proper right side, was more important than a notion of a "gendered" location. Only when the main theme of the sculpture was a dual-sex theme such as Umā-Maheśvara did the desire to align the sex of the sponsor with that of the god seemingly overcome the left-side-preference. Interestingly, in a theme of a metalwork sculpture identified by the Nalanda Museum as Kāmadeva and Ratī, with Ratī on the viewer's left and Kāmadeva on the right (opposite the usual Umā-Maheśvara convention), the solo female sponsor figure is also on the left side, again aligning the sex of the sponsor with that of the deity depicted. Or is this still the general preference for the left side, no matter what?

One fact that might be distorting an analysis from such a small pool of objects is the fact established above, that 44% of the sample comes from Viṣṇu sculptures. Why does that matter? Because in Bengal and Bihar (in both Magadha and Mithilā), it was the practice to locate Garuḍa, Viṣṇu's *vāhana* either at the center (as in Fig. 14.18) or, more often, the right side of the

pedestal (as in Fig. 14.16). The latter option presented the sculptor with an empty space on the left side of the pedestal, though the sculptors came up with various methods to deal with that a priori condition. Still, to the extent that sculptors had discretion to place sponsors in a way that was balanced with the overall composition, that may actually affect our analysis. Other themes also have such iconographic requirements; to name only one, on Pretasaṃtarpita Lokeśvara, the *preta* Sūcīmukha is inevitably on the viewer's left side of the pedestal, since the outstretched, downward pointing hand of the bodhisattva is the one that drips the *amrit* that soothes his suffering. Sponsors similarly have to be fit in around this fixed thematic requirement.

Clearly, there are still many questions left to answer concerning the nuances determining placement of sponsor figures. In addition, we must attempt, after the fact, without the benefit of textual evidence contemporary to the sculpture,[27] to determine how much of the decision-making was conscious versus unconscious conventions or inherited tradition, and to verify the extent to which the sponsor or the sculptor decided such things. Only the largest possible pool of sculptures can contribute convincing evidence for a balanced analysis. We are still at the beginning of the process.

What we can safely conclude regarding Mithilā sculpture, however, using the depictions of sponsors as one of the indices, is that overall it was in line with many of the practices of eastern Indian sculpture at least of Bihar and Bengal. The fact that other regions had slightly different conventions even for the consistent location of Garuḍa, for example,[28] suggests that Mithilā sculpture was, as Susan Huntington concluded, largely affiliated with eastern Indian sculpture of the ca. 10th-13th centuries, and on the basis of other style indicators, that it was also exposed to the practices and forms of what she called Cedi art as well. Mithilā sculpture then forms its own regional

stylistic and iconographic vocabulary that certainly reflects interactions on the part of patrons and sculptors with the art and artists of the surrounding areas. At the same time it developed a distinctive mode that is definitely worth studying in greater detail.

Referecnes:

1. I thank Shiva Kumar Mishra and Bhairav Lal Das, whose idea it was for me to travel to these sites, and to be guided by the enthusiastic Dr. Sushant Kumar who has spent several years scouting villages in the region for traces of older sculpture. I am indebted to all three of them for their knowledge and conviction that this is a fruitful, and nearly untapped area for study. Earlier, I had been to Vaiśālī, which is sometimes included within the ambit of Mithilā, but I leave the sculptures seen in the Archaeological Museum there out of this account.
2. In an article by the reporter Reena Sopam that appeared in the 23 January 2017 edition of the on-line version of the *Hindustan Times* under the headline, "US art historian concerned over state of Mithila heritage," I was purported to have criticized (in a phone interview) the way the sculptures are preserved. This completely misstated my position and created false quotes attributed to me. In fact I had said that the sculptures were extremely well cared for in the villages. I do not believe, as she quotes Dr. Sushant as saying, that the "idols should be shifted to museums." I consider the current daily *pūjā*s of the objects to be more appropriate, and more in line with the intentions of the makers, than for the sculptures to be housed in galleries or storage godowns as art or archaeological artifacts. Although I repeatedly tried to send the editor a letter requesting that the blatant misquoting be corrected, each email was returned undelivered. I take this opportunity to set the record straight.
3. The richest concentration of ca. 12th remains, including architectural lintels and supports, that I observed was at Bheet Bhagwanpur. In the literature I have encountered, the site is mainly mentioned for the inscription found on the pedestal of an image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (which I did not see there). The reported inscription mentions the son of Nānyadeva, Malladeva as the ruler. It is speculated that Bheet Bhagwanpur may have been the capital of the Karṇāṭa kingdom during Malladeva's reign, and the riches of the visible heritage there supports the idea

that it was once a major cultural site. See Bhagwant Sahai, *The Inscriptions of Bihar: From Earliest Times to the Middle of the 13th Century* (Patna: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1983), 134–135, inscription no. 157; Radha Krishna Chaudhury, "The Karṇāṭs of Mithilā (C. 1097–1355 A.D.)." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 35 (1954): 98–99.

4. Indian Museum Acc. no. A25167/4012.
5. Upendra Thakur charts the hostility towards Buddhism found in literary accounts of Brahmanical practice in Mithilā, and contrasts it with the "numerous images of the Buddha and beautiful fragments of Buddhist art and other Buddhist objects of antiquarian interest." Upendra Thakur, "A survey of Buddhism and Traces of Buddhist Remains in Mithilā," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* Special Issue no. 2 (1956): 442. Recently, Buddhist sources have been utilized for their geographic information about Mithilā; see Shiva Kumar Mishra and Achyut Anand, "Topography of Mithilā Based on the Buddhist Sources," *Mithilā Bhāratī* 3 (2016): 181–201.
6. K.P. Jayaswal, "Contributions to the History of Mīthilā" *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 9 nos. 3&4 (1923): 300–310; and 10 nos. 1&2 (1924): 37–46; R. C. Majumdar, "King Nānyadeva of Mithilā," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 7 (1931): 679–689; Chaudhury, "The Karṇāṭs of Mithilā (C. 1097–1355 A.D.)," 91–121; Chandreshwar Prasad Nayayan Sinha, *Mithila Under the Karnatas (C. 1097–1325 A.D.)* (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1979), esp. 34–54; Ram Sharan Sharma. *A Comprehensive History of India*. Volume Four, Part I: *The Colas, Calukyas and Rajputs (AD 985–1206)*, (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1992), 585–591; Shiva Raj Shrestha 'Malla', "Nanyadeva, His Ancestors and their *Abhijana* (Original Homeland)" *Ancient Nepal* 159 (2005): 1–20.
7. Sinha, *Mithila Under the Karnatas*, 50.
8. Shrestha 'Malla', "Nanyadeva, His Ancestors," 1.
9. M. Ramakrishna Kavi, "King Nanyadeva on Music" *Quarterly Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*. 1 no. 2 (1926): 53–63.
10. Kavi, "King Nanyadeva on Music," 61.
11. Kavi, "King Nanyadeva on Music," 56.
12. See for example, Upendra Thakur, "A Survey of Buddhism and Traces of Buddhist Remains in Mithilā," 428–449; Jayadeva Mishra, "Buddhist Art and Archaeology in Mithilā (With Special Reference to Darbhanga Division,"*Art and Archaeology of Eastern India*, ed. Naseem Akhtar (Patna: Patna Museum, 1997), 155–157; Sushant Kumar, *Darbhanga Prakshetra ki Pashan Pratimayen* (Varanasi: Kala Prakashan, 2016); and Shiva Kumar Mishra, "Mithilak nav bhetal kichhu durlabh puravashesh [Some recently discovered rare antiquities of Mithila]" *Mithilā Bhāratī* 3 nos. 1–4 (2016): 1–12, 217–226, in Hindi. An early exception is S. A. Shere, "Three Interesting Medieval Sculptures from District Saran," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 31 no. 3 (1945): 155–158.

13. Frederick Asher, *Art of Eastern India, 300–800* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1980).
14. Susan Huntington, *The "Pāla-Sena" Schools of Sculpture* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), figs. 158 & 159.
15. S. Huntington, *The "Pâla-Sena" Schools*, 131.
16. Ibid.
17. S. Huntington, *The "Pāla-Sena" Schools*, 131–132.
18. S. Huntington, *The "Pāla-Sena" Schools*, 132.
19. I wish to register my thanks to Dr. Shankar Suman, Additional Director and Curator of the Patna Museum, for his generosity in allowing me access to the fine collection at the museum during my time there in December 2016 and January 2017.
20. Ibid.
21. For example, a Viṣṇu sculpture in the Videśwarathan of Lohana village of Madhubani district has a number of similar features to a slightly earlier example from Almora (now in Uttarkhand) in the State Museum of Lucknow (Acc. no. 45.48), including the rounded segment of an arc at the top with flat patterning, the cutting-out of the silhouette of the body, but not behind the head, the *vanamālā* of *campaka*-flowers that covers the knee caps, the division of the pedestal into a *triratha* form, leaving two or more segments plain, etc. The Lucknow sculpture is illustrated in S. D. Trivedi, S.D., *A Guide Book to the Archaeological Section, The State Museum, Lucknow* (Lucknow: State Museum, 1997), fig. 81.
22. Shresthi 'Malla', "Nanyadeva, His Ancestors," 15.
23. R. S. Sharma, *Comprehensive History* vol. 4 part I, 586. Another idea which again ignores a literal or recent connection with Karnataka, is that of Dimitrov who noticed the remarkable constellation of the names of Nanna, one of his titles being Dharmāvaloa, and Kīrtirāja (his brother's name) to suggest the possibility that "Nānyadeva's forefathers were somehow related to the surmised branch of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas " mentioned in an inscription in Bodhgaya; Dragomir Dimitrov, *The Legacy of the Jewel Mind: on the Sanskrit, Pali, and Sinhalese Works by Ratnamati, a Philological Chronicle (Phullalocanavaṃsa)*

(Napoli: Universita degla studi di Napole 'L'Orientale', 2016), 84.

24. This does not include the 178 examples of sculptures with sponsor figures documented in Orissa in February and March 2017, nor those in several museums and sites in Uttar Pradesh including 35 documented at the time of writing.
25. Gautam Sengupta, "Donors of Images in Eastern India (C. 800-1300 A.D.)" *Indian History Congress, XLIII Session, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra 28 30 December, 1982* (Kurukshetra: Kurukshetra University Press, 1982), 160.
26. See Rob Linrothe, "Donor Figures on 9th to 12th Century Sculptures in Eastern India: A Progress Report," *Journal of Bengal Art*, 22(2017):59-66. The article includes illustrations and discussion of the Andhra Thari (Madhubhani district) inscribed Viṣṇu pedestal on which a double sponsor portrait appears that can be identified as one of the ministers of Nānyadeva, Śrī Dhara, and his wife.
27. *Śilpa śāstra* texts, illuminating as they are, present an idealized, prescriptive version of how things should be done, not necessarily how they actually were. To the extent that one can project backwards from current practice, Pradosh Mishra has demonstrated that a contemporary workshop master of Orissa working in a traditional style, although aware of such *Śilpa śāstra*s, worked without direct access to them. It is doubtful that any but a handful of extremely learned and literate architect-sculptors could have treated such texts as anything like "manuals" which is what they purport to be. See Pradosh K Mishra, *From Stone to God: Workshop Tradition of Odishan Sculpture* (Delhi: Vijaya Books, 2015).
28. In contrast to Bihar and West Bengal, I have noticed a strong (though not invariable) tendency in Orissan Viṣṇu sculpture of the same period to place Garuḍa on the viewer's left side of the pedestal, and to elevate him slightly above the pedestal.

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File numbers of the 20 figures.

Fig. 1.= D17_7214 Bhairava
Fig. 2. = D17_7198 Detail of Fig. 1.
Fig. 3. = D17_6925 Camuṇḍā
Fig. 4. = D17_6919 Detail of Fig. 3.
Fig. 5. = D17_6915 Detail of Fig. 3
Fig. 6. = D17_7724 Durgā
Fig. 7. = D17_7117 Detail from a Sūrya
Fig. 8. = D17_7534 Umā-Maheśvara
Fig. 9. = D17_7566 Detail of Fig. 8.
Fig. 10. = D17_7539 Detail of Fig. 8
Fig. 11. = D17_7653 Detail of faces of Śiva and Umā
Fig. 12. = D17_7652 Detail of Fig. 11.
Fig. 13. = D17_6816. Viṣṇu
Fig. 14. = D17_7734 Viṣṇu on Garuḍa
Fig. 15. = D17_7719 Detail of Fig. 14.
Fig. 16. = D17_7330 Viṣṇu
Fig. 17. = D17_7628 Viṣṇu
Fig. 18. = D17_7592 Detail of Fig. 17
Fig. 19. = D17_7085 Tārā
Fig. 20. = D17_7062 Detail of Fig. 19



Fig. 1. Bhairava stone sculpture at the Balia Bhairavathan, Madhubani district; ht. 183 cm.



Fig. 2. Detail of Fig. 1, depicting the face of Bhairava.



Fig. 3. Camuṇḍā stone sculpture in the Kaliasthan of Baripura village, Begusarai district; ht. 103 cm.



Fig. 4. Detail of Fig. 3 depicting face of Camuṇḍā.



Fig. 5; Detail of Fig. 3 depicting sponsor figures.



Fig. 6. Durgā stone sculpture from Viṣṇu Mandir of Salampur village, Madhubani district; ht. 61 cm.

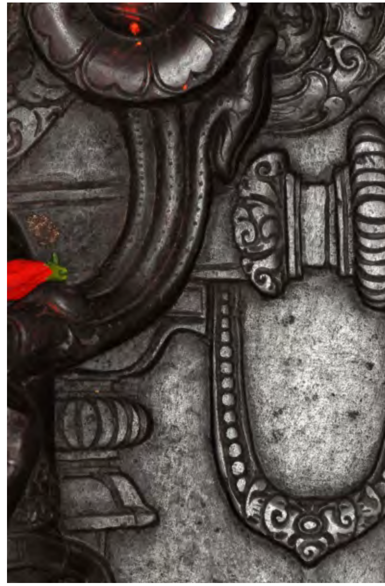


Fig. 7. Detail from the backslab of a Sūrya stone sculpture (ht. approx. 145 cm) in the Sūrya Mandir of Raghepura village Darbhanga.

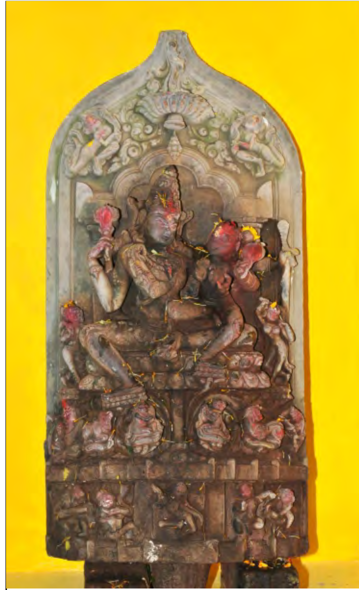


Fig. 8. Umā-Mahesvara stone scupturein Bheet Bhagwanpur, Madhubani district; ht. 125 cm.



Fig. 9. Detail of finial of Fig. 8.



Fig. 10. Detail of pedestal of Fig. 8 depicting sponsor couple



Fig. 11. Detail of faces of Śiva and Umā in stone sculpture of Śivala Mandir in Binwar village, Darbhanga district; ht of entire sculpture (not shown) 40 cm.

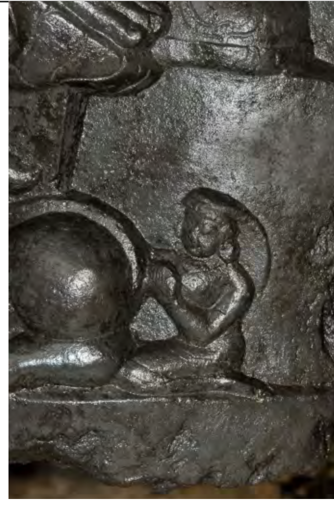


Fig. 12. Detail of the sponsor on the right side of the pedestal on same sculpture as Fig. 11.



Fig. 13. Viṣṇu torso, stone, ca. 8th- 9th c., from Birpur, Begusarai district; ht. 29.5 cm; in Begusarai Museum, no visible accession number.



Fig. 14. Viṣṇu riding on Garuḍa, stone sculptures in the Viṣṇu Mandir of Salampur village Madhubani district; ht. 95 cm.



Fig. 15. Detail of sponsor figure on Fig. 14.



Fig. 16. Viṣṇu stone sculpture of Tharhi village's Durgasthan, Madhubani district; ht. 75 cm.



Fig. 17. Viṣṇu stone sculpture of Binwara village's Sivala Mandir, Darbhanga district; hit. 132 cm.



Fig. 18. Detail of Fig. 17, showing sponsors of Binwar village Viṣṇu



Fig. 19. Seated Tārā stone sculpture, Darbhanga Chandradhary Museum Acc. no. AY52; ht. approx. 50 cm.



Fig. 20. Detail of Fig. 19, depicting sponsor couple.